THE MURDER OF LESLIE CROSBY

A Sequel to the 1940 film, The Letter

By Jim Giatas

The Murder of Leslie Crosbie

Sequel and Prequel Edition I

Including *Epilogue Addendum: The Confession of Leslie Crosbie*

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Dedication

To the moon that watched everything— the lies, the longing, the letter, and the final quiet of Leslie Crosbie's breath.

To the voices who lived in shadow— the widow, the houseboy, Ong, Dorothy, Robert, Howard— each of them carrying truths the film could not speak.

To William Wyler, W. Somerset Maugham, and the artists who shaped the world from which this story grows— this book is offered in admiration, not imitation.

To those who have ever wondered what happened after the garden gate, after the scream, after the silence.

And finally, to readers who step into this imagined continuation— may you find in these pages the justice, the sorrow, and the humanity that lingered long after the credits faded.

Foreword

I. The Characters Speak

The moon has always watched us.

It watched the night Leslie Crosbie fired her revolver into Geoffrey Hammond's chest. It watched the trial, the lies, the letter, the trembling silences. And it watched the moment when Hammond's widow stepped from the shadows outside Howard Joyce's garden wall and fulfilled the vow she had carried in her heart since the day her husband died.

We speak now—not as ghosts, but as voices lingering in the world that followed.

Robert Crosbie: I once believed my life was orderly, respectable, secure. Leslie's death did not simply end a marriage; it shattered the illusions I had built around it. This sequel tells the truth I never could: that grief is not a single blow but a long unraveling. And yet, in these pages, I find a strange mercy. A chance to rise from humiliation into something gentler, something human.

Howard Joyce: I lived by the law, and I betrayed it. I lived by honor, and I compromised it. In this continuation, my downfall is not a punishment but a reckoning. The truth I buried returns—not to destroy me, but to reveal who I truly was beneath the veneer of respectability.

Ong Chi Seng: People called me a clerk. They never saw the mind behind the spectacles. In this sequel, I am no longer a shadow in Howard's office. I am a man who understands the

power of truth, the leverage of secrets, and the quiet patience required to wait for one's moment. The letter was never mine, but the consequences were.

Dorothy Joyce: I stood beside Howard for years, believing in his integrity. When it collapsed, so did I. This sequel gives me a voice I never had—a voice of sorrow, yes, but also of renewal. I am not merely a witness to my husband's ruin. I am a woman who discovers her own strength in the ruins.

Hammond's Widow: I did not kill Leslie Crosbie out of madness. I killed her because justice had been denied to me. This book does not excuse me, nor does it condemn me. It allows me to speak. It allows me to be seen—not as a symbol, not as a threat, but as a woman whose grief demanded an answer.

The Houseboy: I held Leslie while the widow struck. I did not tremble. I did not hesitate. In this sequel, I am not a silent figure in the background. I am a witness to injustice, a participant in vengeance, and a man who must now face the consequences of loyalty.

We speak together now, under the same moon that watched everything.

This sequel is not our redemption. It is our truth.

II. The Actors Speak

Now the voices shift. The characters fade, and the actors step forward—those who once inhabited these roles under the hot lights of a Hollywood soundstage.

Bette Davis (Leslie Crosbie): Leslie was one of the coldest, most complex women I ever played. She lived behind a mask of poise, but inside her was a storm. This sequel fascinates me because it finally lets the world see the consequences of her lies. Leslie's death was abrupt in the film—forced by the moral codes of the time. Here, her death becomes the beginning of a deeper story.

Herbert Marshall (Robert Crosbie): Robert was a man who wanted to believe in dignity, in order, in the quiet decency of life. Playing him meant living inside a man who discovers he has been deceived for years. This sequel gives Robert something the film never could: a future. A chance to rebuild, to love again, to understand himself beyond Leslie's shadow.

James Stephenson (Howard Joyce): Howard was a role that demanded restraint. He was a man torn between duty and compassion. In this sequel, his collapse is complete—and yet it is honest. I appreciate that the story does not vilify him. It simply reveals him.

Gale Sondergaard (Mrs. Hammond): I played the widow as a silent force—controlled, dignified, terrifying in her stillness. This sequel allows her to speak. It gives her interiority, motive, sorrow, and strength. She becomes more than a symbol of vengeance. She becomes a woman whose grief shaped the fate of everyone around her.

Sen Yung (Ong Chi Seng): Ong was often underestimated. I played him as a man who saw everything and said little. This sequel finally lets him step out of the shadows. It gives him agency, ambition, and a future that is entirely his own.

Frieda Inescort (Dorothy Joyce): Dorothy was a quiet presence in the film, but she carried enormous emotional weight. This sequel honors her. It allows her to rise from heartbreak into a new life, one shaped not by her husband's choices but by her own.

Together, we—actors and characters—step forward and back, forward and back, weaving memory with imagination.

This foreword is our shared acknowledgment that stories do not end when the credits roll. They continue in the minds of those who watch, those who remember, and those who dare to ask:

What happened next?

This book answers that question.

Preface

The Murder of Leslie Crosbie

The 1940 film *The Letter*, directed by William Wyler and starring Bette Davis, Herbert Marshall, and James Stephenson, remains one of the most enduring works of American film noir melodrama. Adapted from W. Somerset Maugham's 1927 play—and ultimately from his earlier short story—the film distilled a real historical scandal into a taut, moonlit drama of passion, deceit, and colonial tension. Its opening sequence, its brooding score, and its unforgettable performances have secured its place as a classic of the genre.

Yet the film's ending was not Maugham's. The Production Code Administration required that Leslie Crosbie's crime not go unpunished, and so the film concludes with a postscript: Leslie's murder outside the garden gate, carried out by Hammond's widow and witnessed by her houseboy. It is a powerful ending, but it leaves the deeper consequences unexplored. What becomes of Robert Crosbie after learning the truth of his marriage? What becomes of Howard Joyce, who compromised his integrity to protect Leslie? What becomes of his clerk, Ong Chi Seng, whose quiet ambitions and moral calculations ripple beneath the surface? And what becomes of the widow and the houseboy, whose act of vengeance is swift, deliberate, and final?

This book begins where the film ends.

***The Murder of Leslie Crosbie* is a speculative sequel—a work of fiction that imagines the world beyond the final frame of Wyler's film. It does not retell *The Letter*, nor does it attempt to revise its events. Instead, it follows the aftermath: the legal reckoning, the**

emotional collapse, and the shifting alliances that emerge once Leslie's lies and the suppressed letter can no longer be hidden.

The widow and the houseboy, who act without hesitation or remorse, must now face the machinery of colonial justice. Their trial becomes the crucible in which Leslie's deception, her affair with Geoffrey Hammond, and the moral failures of those around her are finally exposed. Howard Joyce confronts the collapse of his career. His clerk, Ong, seizes the moment—using the reserved copies of the letter to destroy his employer and claim the practice for himself. Robert Crosbie, devastated by the truth of his marriage, finds unexpected solace in Dorothy Joyce, whose own life has been shattered by Howard's downfall.

This book explores the shadows left behind by *The Letter*: the fragility of reputation, the cost of silence, the tensions of colonial society, and the haunting presence of the moon—a symbol that watched Leslie's lies, her trial, and finally her death.

It is written with deep respect for the original film, its creators, and its legacy. No copyrighted dialogue or scenes are reproduced. Instead, this work seeks to honor the spirit of Wyler's film and Maugham's story by extending their world, deepening their themes, and imagining the human consequences of the choices that defined Leslie Crosbie's fate.

If the copyright holders of *The Letter* should ever read this work, I hope they will see it as a tribute—crafted with admiration, restraint, and a desire to continue the story in a way that is both faithful and new.

Author's Note

The Murder of Leslie Crosbie

This book is an original work of fiction inspired by the world, atmosphere, and unresolved tensions of the 1940 film *The Letter*. That film—directed by William Wyler and featuring unforgettable performances by Bette Davis, Herbert Marshall, James Stephenson, and Gale Sondergaard—has endured as one of the great American crime melodramas. Its moonlit opening, its moral ambiguity, and its portrayal of colonial Malaya created a setting that invites further exploration long after the final frame fades.

The film itself was adapted from earlier works by W. Somerset Maugham, who drew upon a real incident in British Malaya involving a woman accused of murder. Over time, the story passed through multiple interpretations: short fiction, stage drama, early film, and finally Wyler's 1940 version. Each retelling added new layers—legal tension, cultural conflict, and the haunting presence of the moon that watches silently over every deception.

This book continues the story where the film concludes.

In *The Letter*, Leslie Crosbie's death arrives suddenly, imposed by the moral restrictions of the era. Her murder—committed by Hammond's widow and witnessed by her houseboy—serves as a final act of vengeance but leaves the aftermath unexplored. What becomes of Robert Crosbie, shattered by the truth of his marriage? What becomes of Howard Joyce, whose professional integrity collapses under the weight of Leslie's lies? What becomes of his clerk, Ong Chi Seng, whose quiet ambitions and careful observations shape the fate of everyone around him? And what becomes of the widow and the houseboy, whose deliberate act of revenge must now face the machinery of colonial justice?

This book imagines those consequences.

It follows the legal reckoning that unfolds after Leslie's murder, the shifting alliances within the expatriate community, and the personal tragedies that emerge when truth can no longer be hidden. It explores the collapse of Howard Joyce's career, Ong's calculated rise, Robert Crosbie's search for meaning after betrayal, and the widow's final confrontation with the colonial system that failed her. The moon—so central to the film's imagery—remains a silent witness throughout, watching the unraveling of lies, the exposure of secrets, and the slow, painful emergence of truth.

This work does not reproduce copyrighted dialogue or scenes from the film. Instead, it offers a new narrative built from original prose, new events, and new interpretations of the characters' futures. It is written with deep respect for the film's creators, its performers, and its legacy. My hope is that this sequel honors the spirit of *The Letter* while expanding its world in a way that is both faithful and new.

If the copyright holders of *The Letter* should ever read this work, I hope they will see it as a tribute—crafted with admiration for the film's artistry and with a desire to continue its story thoughtfully, respectfully, and imaginatively.

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Introduction

The moon hangs over Malaya like a white and watchful eye.

Its cold light spills across the narrow road that skirts the outer wall of Howard Joyce's property—the wall Leslie has just passed through after her solitary walk in his garden. The night air is heavy, fragrant, still. Behind the wall, the party continues: laughter, clinking glasses, the rustle of dresses, the hum of a piano played too softly for anyone to notice the absence of one hostess. Only the moon sees everything. Only the moon hears the last echo of her scream.

It was not a single emotion but a storm—shock, outrage, disbelief, the wounded pride of a woman who had always believed herself untouchable. In that final instant, Leslie's fury rose higher than her fear. That a native widow, a woman she had dismissed as beneath her, should strike the last blow—this was the final insult. Her triumph in court, purchased with lies and silence, dissolved into nothing. The blade entered; the scream broke; the moon watched.

And the widow felt no weight. No remorse. No trembling hesitation. Only the clean, cold completion of revenge.

For she had offered Leslie an honorable death.

Moments earlier—just after Leslie's walk through Howard's garden—the widow had placed a knife outside Leslie's door. One from her own household set. Its polished handle gleamed in the moonlight, a silent invitation, a final gesture of dignity: die by your own hand, and the debt between us ends. Leslie saw it. She understood it. And she dismissed it with the same contempt she had shown the widow's grief, the widow's marriage, the widow's humanity.

The widow retrieved the knife almost immediately. The opportunity dissolved. The mercy expired.

Now, just outside the wall surrounding Howard's property, that same knife emerges from the widow's coat sleeve. Its familiar weight rests easily in her hand. She steps forward with the calm of a woman fulfilling a vow. Held fast by the houseboy, Leslie's eyes widen—not with guilt, but with outrage. Her scream rises, sharp and furious, as the blade finds its mark.

The houseboy stands beside the widow, his expression composed, his loyalty unwavering. He feels no burden. He shares her satisfaction. Justice, in their eyes, has finally been done.

Inside the wall, the music swells. A toast is raised. No one notices the absence of the hostess who had charmed them all with her easy smile.

By dawn, the moon will fade, but its work will continue.

Ong, Howard's junior attorney, will soon retrieve the reserved copies of the letter—copies he has kept quietly, waiting for the moment when they might serve him. The murder will give him that moment. Howard's downfall will be swift; his disbarment inevitable. Ong will rise, as he always intended, stepping into the practice Howard built, wearing the confidence of a man who has finally seized what he believes he deserves.

Howard's wife will break under the scandal. Bob Crosbie, hollowed by grief and revelation, will find in her a gentleness he had forgotten existed. Their shared sorrow will become shared solace, and solace will become love. Together they will rebuild what Leslie's lies destroyed. Together they will find a future.

The widow and the houseboy will stand trial beneath the same moon that witnessed the killing. Willard, ineffective and outmatched, will falter as the defense attorney. Ong will prosecute with precision, wielding the letter like a blade. Bob's testimony—raw, humiliated, honest—will strip away Leslie's carefully woven story. The truth will rise, and with it, the verdict. The hangman will do his work.

And yet the story will not end there.

For the moon remembers. It remembers Leslie's scream. It remembers the lies that led to it. It remembers the night when justice failed and vengeance answered. It remembers the plantation, the lovers, the betrayals, the quiet ambitions that grew in the shadows of the law.

This book begins where the film ends—at the moment the moon looked down upon a murder and refused to look away.

From here, the story unfolds.

Chapter One - The Murder of Leslie Crosbie

The moon had climbed higher—round, white, and pitiless—by the time Leslie Crosbie stepped through the garden gate and onto the narrow road that bordered Howard Joyce's property. She paused, drawing in the night air as though it might steady her. The party's music drifted faintly over the wall, softened by distance, blurred by the thickness of the tropical dark. She could still hear the piano, the laughter, the clinking glasses. Her guests believed her inside, charming them with that winning smile she had perfected over years of social maneuvering.

But the moon knew better.

It watched her now, its light falling across her face, revealing the strain beneath the elegance. Leslie's walk through Howard's garden had not soothed her. It had only sharpened the edges of her thoughts. She had felt the old unease rising again—the memory of Jeff Hammond, the letter, the lies she had told with such practiced ease. She had won. She had survived. She had walked free.

And yet the moon followed her like a witness.

She moved toward the outer gate, her silk gown whispering against the gravel. She intended to be alone for a moment, to gather herself before returning to the party. But as she approached the gate she recalled the knife laying outside her room doorway.

Its polished handle gleamed in the moonlight, unmistakably foreign to the Hammond household. She recognized it instantly. She had seen its twin earlier that evening—at the widow's home, on a display counter beside other items for sale, its blade catching the lantern light. A knife, simple, sturdy, ivory handle, handmade, carved.

Leslie froze.

The message was clear. The invitation unmistakable. A final gesture of dignity: take your own life, and the debt ends here. No scandal. No humiliation. No reckoning.

She stared at the knife for a long moment, her breath shallow, her pulse quickening. The moonlight made the blade look almost ceremonial, as though it had been placed with reverence rather than malice.

But Leslie's pride rose like a tide.

She turned back into the guest room, dismissing the knife as she had dismissed the widow's grief, the widow's marriage, the widow's humanity. She turned away, refusing even to touch it. When she looked again later, the knife was gone. The widow had retrieved it. The offer had expired.

Leslie stepped through the gate and onto the road, her mind already shifting back to the party, to her guests, to the performance she would resume. She lifted her chin, preparing to walk with the same confident stride she had used in court.

But the moonlight shifted.

A shadow detached itself from the darkness near the wall. The houseboy grabbed Leslie.

The widow stepped forward.

Her face was calm—eerily calm—her eyes reflecting the moon's cold glow. She moved with the certainty of someone fulfilling a vow. Leslie's breath caught, her outrage rising faster than her fear.

"You," Leslie whispered, her voice sharp, incredulous.

The widow did not answer. She reached into her coat sleeve and drew out the knife—the same knife Leslie had refused. Its blade flashed once in the moonlight.

Leslie's scream tore through the night, a sound filled not with guilt but with fury. Fury at the audacity. Fury at the insult. Fury at the final, undeniable defeat.

Quickly the blade found its mark.

Leslie staggered backward, her hand reaching for the wall as though it might hold her upright. Her eyes widened, her mouth opened, and the scream broke into silence. She collapsed onto the ground, her blood soaked gown pooling around her like spilled moonlight.

The houseboy stepped forward from the shadows, his expression composed, his loyalty unwavering. He looked down at Leslie with no remorse, no hesitation, no burden. Only satisfaction. Only justice, as he understood it.

The widow wiped the blade once, then slipped it back into her sleeve. She did not look at the body again. She turned away, her posture straight, her steps steady. The houseboy followed her without a word.

Behind the wall, the party continued.

The piano played. Glasses clinked. Laughter rose and fell. No one noticed the absence of the hostess who had charmed them all with her easy smile.

The moon watched.

It watched the body. It watched the road. It watched the wall. It watched the two figures led by the police officer disappearing into the night.

And it remembered.

Chapter Two

The Policeman's Lantern

The moon had begun its slow descent when the policeman found them.

He had been walking the perimeter of Howard Joyce's property, making his rounds with the steady rhythm of a man accustomed to quiet nights. The party's distant music drifted over the wall—soft, indistinct, a reminder that the expatriate world was still awake, still drinking, still congratulating itself on its own illusions.

Then he saw the figures.

Two shapes moving away from the garden gate, their steps measured, their faces calm. The widow walked first, her posture straight, her coat sleeve concealing the knife she had just used. The houseboy followed, his expression composed, his loyalty unbroken. Neither hurried. Neither trembled. Neither looked back.

The policeman raised his lantern.

Its beam cut through the moonlight, revealing the blood on the widow's hand.

He did not shout. He did not reach for his weapon. He simply stepped forward, the lantern held high, and said the single word that would begin the unraveling of everything:

"Stop."

The widow halted. The houseboy halted. They turned toward the lantern as though it were another moon—smaller, harsher, unblinking.

The policeman's eyes moved past them to the ground near the wall. Leslie Crosbie lay there, her gown spread like a pale shroud, her face frozen in the final expression of outrage and disbelief. The moonlight made her look almost peaceful, but the wound at her chest told the truth.

The policeman lowered the lantern slightly.

"You will come with me."

The widow nodded once. The houseboy did the same. They did not resist. They did not speak. They walked beside the policeman as though they had been expecting him, as though this moment were simply the next step in a path they had chosen long ago.

The lantern swung gently as they moved toward the road.

Behind the wall, the party continued.

The Arrest

By the time they reached the district station, the sky had begun to pale. The widow and the houseboy were placed in separate rooms—bare, quiet, lit by a single bulb that hummed faintly. The policeman filed his report with the same calm he had shown at the scene. He did not embellish. He did not speculate. He wrote only what he had seen.

A murder. A knife. Two figures walking away. No resistance.

The station chief read the report twice, his brow tightening. Leslie Crosbie's name carried weight. Her husband's position, her social standing, her acquittal only hours earlier—these were complications that would ripple through the community like shockwaves.

He sent for Howard Joyce.

Howard's Awakening

Howard was still asleep when the knock came. Dorothy answered the door, her robe drawn tight, her face pale from the strain of the trial. The officer at the threshold spoke quietly, but the words struck her like a blow.

"Mr. Joyce is needed at once. There has been… an incident."

Howard appeared behind her, his hair disheveled, his eyes heavy with exhaustion. He listened, and as the officer spoke, his expression changed—not to shock, but to a grim understanding. He had feared something like this. He had felt it in Leslie's trembling voice, in her brittle composure, in the way she had stared at the dagger on her porch before the party began.

Dorothy touched his arm.

"Howard… what has happened?"

He did not answer. He simply took his coat, nodded to the officer, and stepped into the fading night.

Dorothy watched him go, her heart tightening with a sense of foreboding she could not name.

At the Station

Howard arrived just as the widow was being led from her room to the interrogation chamber. She walked with the same calm she had shown at the scene, her eyes steady, her posture unbroken. The houseboy followed, his expression unchanged.

Howard stopped in the doorway.

The widow looked at him.

For a moment, neither spoke. The air between them felt heavy, charged with the weight of everything that had led to this moment—the letter, the lies, the betrayal, the grief.

Howard finally said, "Why?"

The widow answered with a voice that was quiet, steady, and without remorse.

"You know why."

Howard closed his eyes.

He did know.

Ong Arrives

Ong Chi Seng entered the station shortly after Howard. He had been summoned as a clerk, but he arrived with the posture of a man who understood that the world was shifting beneath his feet. He greeted the officers politely, his spectacles catching the light, his expression unreadable.

He saw Howard standing near the interrogation room.

He saw the widow.

He saw the houseboy.

And he saw opportunity.

Not in the murder itself, but in the consequences that would follow—the trial, the evidence, the letter he had quietly reserved, the truth that would finally come to light.

He folded his hands behind his back and waited.

The moon had faded, but its work was not done.

Chapter Three

Ong Chi Seng, Attorney-at-Law

The morning after Leslie Crosbie's murder broke over Singapore with a pale, washed-out light, as though the sky itself were reluctant to reveal the day. The station was already

stirring—clerks shuffling papers, constables exchanging quiet remarks, the widow and the houseboy sitting in separate rooms with the same unbroken calm.

And Ong Chi Seng arrived not as a clerk.

He arrived as an attorney.

His law degree had been formally conferred only days earlier, the ink on the certificate still fresh, the congratulatory letters still stacked neatly on his desk at home. He had not yet announced it publicly. He had waited—quietly, deliberately—for the moment when the knowledge of his new status would matter.

This was that moment.

He stepped into the station with the posture of a man who had crossed an invisible threshold. His spectacles caught the morning light. His suit—pressed with meticulous care—gave him the appearance of someone who had been practicing law for years. He greeted the officers with a polite nod, then walked toward the interrogation chamber where Howard Joyce stood, shoulders heavy, eyes hollow.

Howard turned.

"Ong… what are you doing here?"

Ong bowed slightly, his voice calm.

"I am here in my capacity as an attorney."

Howard blinked, stunned.

"You… you've completed your degree?"

"Yes," Ong said. "I received my certification last week."

Howard stared at him, the realization settling like a stone in his chest. Ong was no longer his clerk. No longer the quiet assistant who fetched files and copied letters. He was now a colleague—an equal in title, though not in experience. And yet, in this moment, Howard felt strangely diminished beside him.

Ong's eyes moved past Howard to the widow, who sat with her hands folded neatly in her lap. She looked at Ong with a steady gaze, as though she recognized something in him—an intelligence, a patience, a quiet resolve.

Howard cleared his throat.

"You're not representing them."

"No," Ong said. "I am here to observe."

Howard frowned. "Observe what?"

"The consequences," Ong replied softly.

The Widow's Statement

The widow was led into the interrogation room. She sat upright, her posture dignified, her expression serene. The constable placed a glass of water before her. She did not touch it.

Howard stood behind the table, his hands resting on the back of a chair. Ong stood near the wall, silent, attentive, his eyes fixed on the widow with a scholar's precision.

The station chief began.

"You are accused of the murder of Mrs. Leslie Crosbie. Do you wish to make a statement?"

The widow lifted her chin.

"I do."

Her voice was calm, almost gentle.

"I killed her."

Howard closed his eyes.

The station chief nodded. "And the houseboy?"

"He held her," the widow said. "So that I could strike."

The houseboy, listening from the adjoining room, did not flinch.

The station chief continued. "Do you understand the gravity of your actions?"

"Yes," the widow said. "I understand."

Howard stepped forward, unable to remain silent.

"Why?" he asked, his voice strained. "Why did you do this?"

The widow turned her gaze toward him.

"You know why."

Howard swallowed hard.

Ong watched the exchange with a quiet intensity. He saw the truth in the widow's eyes—the grief, the betrayal, the injustice that had been buried beneath Leslie's lies. He saw the collapse of Howard's integrity reflected in the widow's calm certainty. And he saw the future unfolding before him, a future in which he would no longer be the man in the background.

Ong's Moment

When the widow was escorted back to her cell, Howard sank into a chair, his face drawn, his hands trembling slightly. The station chief left to prepare the formal charges. The constables dispersed.

Ong remained.

Howard looked up at him, exhausted.

"Ong… what are you thinking?"

Ong adjusted his spectacles.

"I am thinking," he said softly, "that the truth has finally begun to surface."

Howard's voice cracked. "Truth? Leslie is dead. The widow will hang. The houseboy will hang. And I—"

"You," Ong said, "will face what you have done."

Howard stared at him, stunned.

Ong continued, his voice calm, almost gentle.

"You suppressed evidence. You purchased the letter. You concealed the truth from the court. You allowed a lie to stand as justice. And now the consequences have arrived."

Howard's breath caught.

"Ong… you wouldn't…"

"I will," Ong said. "Not out of malice. Out of duty."

Howard's eyes widened with horror.

Ong stepped closer, his posture straight, his voice steady.

"I am an attorney now. And I intend to practice law with integrity."

Howard whispered, "You intend to destroy me."

Ong shook his head.

"No. You destroyed yourself. I am merely acknowledging it."

Howard buried his face in his hands.

Ong turned toward the window, where the morning light was beginning to brighten the sky.

The moon had faded, but its memory remained.

And Ong Chi Seng—attorney-at-law—was ready to step into the world the moon had left behind.

Chapter Four - Consequences

The Fall of Howard Joyce

The day after Leslie Crosbie's murder unfolded with a strange, oppressive stillness. Singapore's heat pressed down like a hand, and even the air inside the colonial courthouse felt heavy, as though the building itself understood that something irreversible was about to occur.

Howard Joyce arrived early.

He walked up the courthouse steps with the slow, deliberate movements of a man carrying a burden too large to hide. His suit was pressed, his collar stiff, but his face betrayed him—drawn, pale, hollowed by sleeplessness. Dorothy had begged him to rest, but rest was impossible. The truth had finally risen, and it was coming for him.

Inside the courtroom, clerks shuffled papers, constables murmured to one another, and the magistrate's bench stood empty, waiting. Howard paused at the threshold, feeling the weight of the room settle around him.

And then he saw Ong.

Ong's Entrance

Ong Chi Seng stood near the front of the courtroom, speaking quietly with the registrar. He wore a dark suit—simple, immaculate—and held a leather folio under his arm. His posture was straight, his expression composed, his spectacles catching the morning light with a faint glint.

He looked every inch the attorney he had become.

When he turned and saw Howard, he bowed politely.

"Good morning, Mr. Joyce."

Howard swallowed. "Ong… must you be here?"

"Yes," Ong said. "I must."

Howard's voice trembled. "You intend to testify."

"I intend," Ong replied, "to tell the truth."

Howard closed his eyes.

The truth. The letter. The purchase. The concealment. The lie that had freed Leslie Crosbie.

It was all coming out.

The Proceedings Begin

The magistrate entered, and the courtroom rose. Howard felt Dorothy's absence like a physical ache—she had stayed home, unable to bear the spectacle of her husband's reckoning. Howard took his seat at the table reserved for the accused. His hands shook as he unfolded a sheet of paper, though he could not bring himself to read it.

The magistrate cleared his throat.

"Mr. Howard Joyce, you stand before this court to answer allegations of professional misconduct, suppression of evidence, and obstruction of justice in the matter of the Crosbie trial."

Howard's breath caught.

The words were formal, but their meaning was devastating.

The magistrate continued. "We will hear testimony from witnesses, including Mr. Ong Chi Seng, attorney-at-law."

Howard looked at Ong, who stood with calm dignity, waiting to be called.

Ong's Testimony

When Ong stepped forward, the courtroom shifted. Even the constables leaned in, sensing that this quiet man—once a clerk, now an attorney—held the key to everything.

Ong bowed to the magistrate.

"Sir, I will speak plainly."

His voice was steady, precise.

"I informed Mr. Joyce of the existence of a letter written by Mrs. Leslie Crosbie to Geoffrey Hammond on the night of the shooting. I provided him with a copy. I told him the original was in the possession of Hammond's widow."

The magistrate nodded. "And what did Mr. Joyce do?"

"He confronted Mrs. Crosbie," Ong said. "She confessed to writing the letter. She persuaded Mr. Joyce to purchase it."

Howard's shoulders sagged.

Ong continued. "Mr. Joyce concealed the letter from the court. He allowed Mrs. Crosbie's false testimony to stand. He permitted an acquittal based on a lie."

Howard whispered, "Ong… please…"

But Ong did not falter.

"I respected Mr. Joyce," he said. "I learned from him. But the law is not a matter of loyalty. It is a matter of truth."

The courtroom fell silent.

The magistrate leaned forward. "Mr. Ong, do you believe Mr. Joyce acted knowingly?"

"Yes," Ong said. "He knew the truth. And he suppressed it."

Howard felt the room tilt. His vision blurred. He gripped the edge of the table to steady himself.

The magistrate nodded gravely. "Thank you, Mr. Ong."

Ong bowed and stepped back.

Howard's Collapse

Howard rose slowly, his legs trembling. He faced the magistrate, his voice barely audible.

"I… I did what I thought was merciful."

The magistrate's expression did not soften.

"Mercy," he said, "is not yours to dispense when justice is at stake."

Howard's breath shuddered.

"I loved her," he whispered. "Not as a man loves a woman, but as a friend loves someone he believes he can save. I thought… I thought I could protect her."

The magistrate shook his head.

"You protected a lie."

Howard's knees buckled. He sank into his chair, his hands covering his face.

The magistrate spoke the words that would end Howard's career.

"Mr. Joyce, you are hereby disbarred. You will no longer practice law in this colony."

Howard's breath broke into a sob.

The courtroom remained silent.

Ong watched, his expression unreadable—not triumphant, not cruel, but solemn. He had not destroyed Howard. Howard had destroyed himself. Ong had merely revealed the truth.

Aftermath

Howard left the courthouse through a side door, avoiding the crowd. He walked slowly, as though each step were heavier than the last. When he reached the street, he paused, staring at the horizon where the moon had hung the night before.

Dorothy was waiting at home.

He did not know how to face her.

He did not know how to face himself.

And somewhere in the city, Ong Chi Seng—attorney-at-law—was preparing for the next chapter of his life, the one he had waited for with quiet patience.

The moon had watched Leslie's lies. Now it watched the consequences.

Chapter Five - Consequences

The Widow and the Houseboy Stand Before the Law

The trial of Hammond's widow and the houseboy was inevitable, but the manner of it required careful deliberation. In the colony, joint trials were permitted when two defendants were charged with participating in the same act—provided their roles were intertwined and the evidence overlapped. In this case, the prosecution argued that the widow and the houseboy acted together: she wielded the knife; he restrained Leslie Crosbie. Their motives were shared, their actions coordinated, and their fates bound.

Thus the court ordered a joint trial.

It would be the most watched proceeding in Singapore since Leslie's own murder trial—though this time, the public's fascination carried a darker, more unsettled tone. The expatriate community whispered behind fans and newspapers. The local population watched with quiet intensity. And the moon, though absent from the daytime hearings, remained a silent witness in memory.

The Courtroom Prepares

The courtroom filled early. The ceiling fans turned lazily overhead, stirring the heavy air but offering little relief. The magistrate's bench stood elevated, flanked by the colonial crest. Rows of wooden seats creaked under the weight of spectators—planters, merchants, clerks, wives in linen dresses, constables in khaki uniforms.

Robert Crosbie sat near the front, his face drawn, his eyes hollow. Dorothy Joyce sat beside him, her hands folded tightly in her lap. She had insisted on attending, despite the pain it caused her. Howard Joyce was not present; his disbarment had left him a ghost in the community, and he remained at home, unable to face the world.

Ong Chi Seng entered with quiet dignity.

He was not part of the prosecution team, but he had been invited to observe—his testimony in Howard's proceedings had marked him as a rising figure in the legal world. He took a seat near the front, his folio resting neatly on his lap, his expression unreadable.

The widow and the houseboy were led in together.

They walked with the same calm they had shown since the night of the murder. The widow's posture was straight, her eyes steady. The houseboy's expression remained composed, his loyalty unbroken. They took their seats at the defense table, side by side.

Willard, the defense attorney, stood behind them—nervous, sweating, already overwhelmed. He had been ineffective in Leslie's trial, and he was outmatched here as well. But he was all they had.

The magistrate entered.

The trial began.

The Charges

The clerk read the charges aloud:

"Murder in the first degree, committed jointly by the defendants, with malice aforethought."

The widow did not flinch. The houseboy did not blink.

Willard rose shakily. "Your Honor, the defense pleads not guilty."

A murmur rippled through the courtroom.

The magistrate nodded. "Proceed."

The Prosecution's Case

The prosecution began with the policeman who had discovered the scene. He testified with calm precision:

"I found the defendants walking away from the garden gate. The widow's hand was stained with blood. The houseboy did not resist. Mrs. Crosbie lay dead near the wall."

The widow listened without expression.

Next came the medical examiner, who described the wound—clean, deliberate, fatal. The knife had entered with controlled force. The widow's hand had not trembled.

Then came the evidence of motive.

The prosecutor spoke with measured gravity:

"The widow's husband, Geoffrey Hammond, was killed by Mrs. Crosbie. The widow believed justice had been denied. She sought vengeance."

Robert closed his eyes.

Dorothy reached for his hand.

Ong watched intently.

The prosecutor continued:

"The houseboy assisted her. He restrained Mrs. Crosbie so the widow could strike."

The courtroom murmured again.

Willard rose to object, but his voice cracked, and the magistrate dismissed him with a wave.

The Widow Speaks

When the widow was called to the stand, the room fell silent.

She walked with dignity, her steps measured, her face serene. She took the oath without hesitation.

The prosecutor approached.

"Did you kill Mrs. Crosbie?"

"Yes."

"Did the houseboy assist you?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

The widow lifted her chin.

"Because justice had been denied to me."

Her voice was calm, steady, almost gentle.

"She killed my husband. She lied. She walked free. I offered her an honorable death. She refused. So I gave her the death she had earned."

A gasp rippled through the courtroom.

The magistrate's face tightened.

The prosecutor stepped back, shaken by the widow's composure.

Willard rose, trembling.

"Mrs. Hammond… do you feel remorse?"

"No."

"Do you understand the consequences?"

"Yes."

“Do you fear them?”

“No.”

Willard sank into his chair.

The widow stepped down from the stand with the same calm she had shown since the night of the murder.

The Houseboy Speaks

The houseboy’s testimony was brief.

He confirmed the widow’s account. He confirmed his role. He confirmed his loyalty.

When asked why he had helped, he answered simply:

“She asked me.”

The prosecutor frowned. “And you obeyed?”

“Yes.”

“Without hesitation?”

“Yes.”

“Do you regret it?”

“No.”

The courtroom murmured again.

The houseboy stepped down.

Ong’s Observation

Throughout the proceedings, Ong watched with a scholar’s intensity. He saw the widow’s dignity, the houseboy’s loyalty, Willard’s incompetence, and the prosecution’s certainty. He saw Robert’s grief and Dorothy’s quiet strength.

He saw the colony’s moral fabric stretched thin.

And he saw the future.

The widow and the houseboy would be convicted. The sentence would be death. The hangman would do his work.

But the trial was more than a legal proceeding.

It was the final unmasking of Leslie Crosbie's lies. It was the collapse of the colonial illusion of justice. It was the moment when truth—long buried—rose to the surface.

Ong folded his hands.

The moon had watched the murder. Now the law watched the consequences.

Chapter Six - The Verdict

Verdict Under the Noon Sun

The trial of Hammond's widow and the houseboy lasted three days. Three days of testimony, three days of murmuring spectators, three days of the colony confronting the truth it had tried so hard to bury. By the morning of the verdict, the courtroom felt charged—heavy with expectation, thick with the heat of Singapore's midday sun.

The ceiling fans turned lazily overhead, stirring the air but offering no relief. The magistrate's bench stood solemn and unmoving. The widow and the houseboy sat side by side at the defense table, their posture unchanged, their expressions calm. Willard, their attorney, looked exhausted—his suit rumpled, his face drawn, his confidence eroded by the weight of a case he could not win.

Robert Crosbie sat near the front, his hands clasped tightly, his eyes fixed on the floor. Dorothy Joyce sat beside him, her presence quiet but steady. She had become his anchor in these days—gentle, composed, offering a kind of solace he had not expected.

Ong Chi Seng entered with the same quiet dignity he had shown throughout the proceedings. He took his seat near the front, his folio resting neatly on his lap. His expression was unreadable, but his eyes were alert, attentive. He understood that this verdict would shape the colony's future—and his own.

The magistrate entered.

The courtroom rose.

Then silence fell.

The Verdict

The magistrate cleared his throat, his voice steady, formal.

"Mrs. Hammond. Houseboy. You stand accused of the murder of Mrs. Leslie Crosbie."

The widow lifted her chin. The houseboy remained still.

The magistrate continued.

"The evidence presented to this court is clear. You acted together. You acted deliberately. You acted with intent."

A murmur rippled through the courtroom.

Robert's breath caught. Dorothy reached for his hand.

The magistrate's voice deepened.

"This court finds both defendants—guilty."

The words struck the room like a blow.

The widow did not flinch. The houseboy did not blink.

They sat with the same calm they had shown since the night of the murder.

Willard sank into his chair, defeated.

Robert closed his eyes, a tremor passing through him.

Dorothy squeezed his hand gently.

Ong watched, his expression solemn. He felt no triumph, no satisfaction—only the weight of justice, heavy and imperfect.

Sentencing

The magistrate continued, his voice grave.

"The sentence for murder in the first degree is death by hanging."

A gasp rippled through the courtroom.

The widow bowed her head once, as though acknowledging a truth she had expected.

The houseboy remained still, his loyalty unbroken.

The magistrate added:

“The execution will be carried out at the end of the month.”

The courtroom erupted—whispers, gasps, murmurs of shock and fascination. The constables stepped forward, restoring order with quiet authority.

The widow rose calmly. The houseboy rose beside her.

They were led from the courtroom, their steps steady, their expressions unchanged.

They did not look back.

Robert’s Collapse

When the widow and the houseboy had been escorted out, Robert remained seated, staring at the empty space where they had been. His face was pale, his eyes hollow.

Dorothy leaned toward him.

“Robert… come. Let’s go.”

He shook his head.

“I can’t,” he whispered. “I can’t move.”

Dorothy placed her hand on his shoulder.

“You must.”

Robert looked at her, his eyes filled with grief and something deeper—something raw, something human.

“She loved him,” he said softly. “She loved Hammond. Even after everything… she loved him.”

Dorothy’s expression softened.

“Yes,” she said. “And now the truth has taken everything.”

Robert closed his eyes.

Dorothy helped him rise.

They walked out together.

Ong's Reflection

Ong remained seated for a moment after the courtroom emptied. He watched the magistrate gather his papers, watched the constables escort the last spectators out, watched the sunlight spill across the floor in long, pale stripes.

He thought of the widow's calm dignity. He thought of the houseboy's unwavering loyalty. He thought of Leslie's lies, Howard's collapse, Robert's grief.

He thought of justice—its imperfections, its weight, its consequences.

He rose slowly, adjusting his spectacles.

The colony had changed. The legal world had changed. His own future had changed.

He stepped out of the courtroom into the bright noon sun.

The moon was gone, but its memory lingered.

And Ong Chi Seng—attorney-at-law—walked forward into the world the moon had left behind.

Chapter Seven - The Moon Would Rise Again

Two Lives in the Wake of Truth

The executions had not yet been scheduled, but the colony had already begun to move on. The widow and the houseboy were confined in separate cells, awaiting the slow machinery of justice. Their calm acceptance unsettled the expatriate community, which preferred its tragedies neat, distant, and unambiguous. But nothing about Leslie Crosbie's death—or her life—had been neat.

Two stories now unfolded in the aftermath: Robert Crosbie's slow return to humanity, and Howard Joyce's humiliation descent.

Robert and Dorothy

Robert had not slept well since the verdict. His nights were restless, filled with half-formed dreams of Leslie's face—sometimes furious, sometimes pleading, sometimes cold as the moon that had watched her die. He woke each morning with a heaviness in his chest, as though grief had settled there like sediment.

Dorothy Joyce visited him often.

Not out of obligation, but out of a quiet, growing tenderness neither of them had expected. She arrived with small comforts—tea, fresh linen, a book she thought he might like. She never pressed him to speak, never demanded explanations, never tried to fill the silence. She simply sat with him, her presence steady and warm.

One evening, as the sun dipped low over the straits, Robert sat on the veranda of his bungalow, staring at the horizon. Dorothy joined him, her steps soft on the wooden boards.

"You're thinking of her," she said gently.

He nodded. "I can't seem to stop."

Dorothy folded her hands in her lap. "Grief doesn't leave quickly. It lingers. It changes shape."

Robert exhaled slowly. "I keep wondering if I ever truly knew her."

Dorothy looked at him with quiet understanding. "You knew the part of her she allowed you to see."

He turned to her. "And you? Did you know Howard?"

Dorothy hesitated. "I knew the man he wanted to be. Not the man he became."

Robert nodded, absorbing her words.

They sat in silence for a long time, the air warm, the sky streaked with gold. Finally, Robert spoke again.

"Dorothy… I don't know what comes next."

She reached out, placing her hand gently over his.

"Then let's find out together."

Robert looked at her hand, then at her face. There was no pity in her eyes—only kindness, and something deeper, something fragile and hopeful.

He closed his fingers around hers.

For the first time since Leslie's death, he felt the faintest stirrings of peace.

The Final Days of Howard Joyce

Howard's bungalow had grown dim and quiet. The curtains remained drawn, the lamps unlit. Dorothy visited him each morning, but he spoke little. His disbarment had hollowed him out, leaving him adrift in a world he no longer recognized.

He spent hours sitting at his desk, staring at the empty space where his law books had once stood. He had removed them himself—packed them into crates and sent them away, unable to bear the sight of the profession he had betrayed.

One afternoon, Ong Chi Seng arrived.

Dorothy answered the door, her expression wary. "Howard isn't receiving visitors."

Ong bowed respectfully. "I ask only for a moment."

Dorothy hesitated, then stepped aside.

Howard sat in his study, his posture slumped, his eyes distant. When Ong entered, Howard looked up with a mixture of shame and resignation.

"Ong," he said quietly. "I suppose you've come to see the ruins."

Ong approached slowly. "I came to see the man who taught me the law."

Howard's breath caught. "I taught you to betray it."

"No," Ong said gently. "You taught me its principles. You taught me its weight. You taught me that truth matters."

Howard shook his head. "And then I abandoned it."

Ong's voice softened. "You made a terrible choice. But you are not a terrible man."

Howard looked at him, eyes glistening. "You destroyed me."

Ong shook his head. "You destroyed yourself. I only revealed what was already true."

Howard exhaled, a long, trembling breath.

Ong continued. "But I did not come to condemn you. I came to thank you."

Howard blinked. "Thank me?"

"Yes," Ong said. "For everything you taught me. For every case we worked together. For every moment you believed in my potential."

Howard's eyes filled. "I failed you."

"No," Ong said. "You failed yourself. But you did not fail me."

Howard bowed his head, overcome.

Ong placed a hand gently on his shoulder—a gesture of respect, not pity.

“Goodbye, Mr. Joyce.”

Howard whispered, “Goodbye, Ong.”

When Ong left, Dorothy found Howard sitting quietly, tears slipping down his cheeks. She knelt beside him, resting her hand on his arm.

“Howard,” she said softly, “you are not alone.”

Howard looked at her, his voice breaking.

“I don’t deserve your kindness.”

Dorothy squeezed his hand. “Kindness isn’t about deserving.”

Howard closed his eyes.

For the first time since his disbarment, he allowed himself to weep.

Two Paths Forward

Robert and Dorothy walked slowly toward a future shaped by truth, not illusion.

Howard walked slowly toward the end of his career, but not the end of his humanity.

And Ong Chi Seng—attorney-at-law—stepped into the world with quiet resolve, carrying both the lessons and the failures of the man who had once been his mentor.

The moon would rise again soon.

It would watch them all.

Chapter Eight

The Last Night of Howard Joyce

The colony moved through the days after the verdict with a strange, unsettled quiet. The widow and the houseboy waited in their separate cells, calm as stone. Robert and Dorothy walked gently toward one another, finding solace in shared sorrow. And Howard Joyce—once the most respected attorney in Singapore—began the slow, deliberate work of ending

his life.

Howard's Tragic Evening

Howard waited until Dorothy had gone to bed.
He sat alone in his study, the shutters half-closed, the air thick with the scent of old paper and dust. His law books were gone, but their absence felt louder than their presence ever had. The desk lamp cast a small circle of light, illuminating the glass he had placed before him.

He had prepared the poison earlier in the day—a quiet, meticulous act, done with the same precision he had once used in drafting legal briefs. The bottle sat beside the glass, its label removed, its contents clear and odorless.

Howard lifted the glass.

He did not tremble.

He did not hesitate.

He whispered into the stillness:

"I tried to protect him. More than Leslie. More than anyone."

But when the moment came, he couldn't bring himself to drink the poison. Instead, he drowned his terror in alcohol and got disastrously drunk until he passed out.

Bob Finds Dorothy

Dorothy found Howard at dawn. She did not scream. She did not faint. She simply stood in the doorway, her hand pressed to her mouth, her eyes filling with tears that did not fall. She saw the empty glass.

Although he was stone drunk unconscious from the night before, Dorothy thought he was dead. She called for Robert.

He arrived within minutes, breathless, shaken, still wearing the clothes he had slept in. When he saw Howard, he stopped in the doorway, his chest tightening, his eyes burning.

Dorothy whispered, "He couldn't bear it."

Robert stepped forward, kneeling beside the chair. "Oh, Howard…" Bob murmured. "You were a good man. A better friend than I deserved."

Dorothy placed her hand on Robert's shoulder.

Robert continued, his voice breaking:

"You tried to protect me. More than Leslie ever did. More than anyone did. You carried the weight of my shame so I wouldn't have to."

He touched Howard's hand— Howard was breathing. His eyes opened.

Dorothy's tears finally fell. The seriousness of Howard's intended suicide shocked them both. Robert looked up at her, his face raw, unguarded. He speaks to Howard:

"I loved you," he said softly. "Not the way I loved Leslie. But I loved you. You were my friend. My true friend."

Dorothy knelt beside him.

Howard spoke two words barely above a whisper, "I know."

Robert bowed his head. And for the first time since Leslie's death, he wept openly—not for her, but for Howard Joyce, the man who had sacrificed everything to shield him from a truth he had never asked to know.

Howard's downfall unfolded rapidly after the Crosbie trial.

Following his disbarment and attempted suicide, his marriage collapsed;
Dorothy divorced him, unable to endure the public disgrace and emotional strain that had overtaken their lives. With his career destroyed and his personal life in ruins, Howard resolved to leave Singapore and return to England to rebuild what remained of his future.

But before departing, Howard made one final, consequential disclosure to the court. He revealed Ong's complicity in suppressing the incriminating letter and in accepting financial gain from the transaction surrounding it. This revelation not only clarified the full extent of the corruption behind the case but also sealed Ong's fate. Howard left Singapore shortly thereafter, carrying with him the weight of scandal, failure, and a desperate hope for reinvention.

Bob's Awakening

Howard's attempted suicide changed Robert. It softened him. It humbled him. It awakened the part of him that had once been capable of deep, unselfish love.

He began visiting Dorothy daily—not out of obligation, but out of genuine affection. They shared meals, quiet walks, long conversations about the past and the uncertain future.

Their grief intertwined, forming a bond stronger than either had expected.

One evening, as they sat on Dorothy's veranda, Robert said:

"He saved me, Dorothy. Even when he shouldn't have. Even when it cost him everything."

Dorothy nodded. "He loved you."

Robert looked at her, his eyes gentle.

"And I loved him. His friendship… it reminds me of who I used to be. Who I want to be again."

Dorothy reached for his hand.

"You're finding your way back."

Robert squeezed her fingers.

"Yes," he said. "With you."

The Widow's Final Days

The widow spent her last days in quiet contemplation.

She asked for no visitors. She requested no special treatment. She spoke only when spoken to. Her cell was small, but she kept it orderly—her blanket folded, her cup rinsed, her posture straight. She prayed each morning, not for mercy, but for peace.

When the chaplain visited, she said:

"I have done what I believed was just. I do not fear what comes next."

Her calm unsettled him.

The houseboy, in his own cell, remained equally composed. He asked only one question:

"Will she be alone at the end?"

The chaplain answered gently, "No. I will be with her."

The houseboy nodded.

"Good."

The Execution

The executions took place at dawn.

The widow was led first. She walked with dignity, her steps steady, her eyes serene. She did not look at the gallows. She looked at the sky—pale, soft, touched with the first hint of morning light.

The chaplain whispered a prayer.

She whispered one in return.

The hangman did his work.

It was quick.

The houseboy followed.

He did not tremble. He did not cry. He did not speak.

He looked once toward the widow's body, then closed his eyes.

The hangman did his work again.

The colony exhaled.

Justice, they said, had been served.

But the moon—though absent from the dawn—remembered everything.

Aftermath

Robert and Dorothy attended the widow and houseboy's burial together. They stood side by side, their hands intertwined, their grief shared. Ong stood at a distance, his hat in his hands, his expression solemn.

The widow and the houseboy were buried quietly, without ceremony. But their story lingered—whispered in markets, murmured in clubs, remembered in silence.

Robert looked at Dorothy as the last clod of earth fell onto the graves.

"I want to live differently now," he said. "With honesty. With kindness. With love."

Dorothy squeezed his hand.

"You already are."

Robert looked up at the sky.

The moon would rise again that night.

And though Leslie was gone, and the widow and the houseboy were gone, the moon would watch the living—Robert, Dorothy, Howard and Ong—as they stepped into a future shaped not by lies, but by truth.

Chapter Nine

The New Life

The colony had begun to settle into its uneasy quiet. The widow and the houseboy were gone, Howard left for England, and Leslie's memory—once sharp as a blade—had softened into something distant, almost spectral. The moon still rose over Singapore, but its gaze no longer felt accusatory. It watched the living now, not the dead.

And the living were beginning again.

Bob and Dorothy

Robert Crosbie had not expected to fall in love again. He had not expected tenderness to return to him, nor warmth, nor the quiet joy of companionship. But Dorothy Joyce had become the steady presence he needed—gentle, perceptive, unafraid of sorrow. She had walked with him through grief, through guilt, through the slow rediscovery of his own humanity.

One evening, as they sat on Dorothy's veranda, the air warm and still, Robert took her hand.

"Dorothy," he said softly, "I don't want to face the rest of my life alone."

Dorothy looked at him, her eyes luminous in the lamplight.

"You won't," she said.

He smiled—an honest, unguarded smile he had not worn in years.

"Will you marry me?"

Dorothy's answer was simple, steady, and full of quiet joy.

"Yes."

Their wedding was small—just a few friends, a modest ceremony, a gentle celebration. No one spoke of Leslie. No one spoke of Howard. No one spoke of the widow or the houseboy. The past was acknowledged only by its absence.

Dorothy wore a simple ivory dress. Robert wore a linen suit. They exchanged vows beneath a canopy of tropical flowers, the air fragrant, the sky clear. When they kissed, it felt like the closing of one life and the beginning of another.

Robert whispered to her afterward:

"You've given me back the man I used to be."

Dorothy touched his cheek.

"No," she said. "You found him yourself."

The Plantation

Leslie's life insurance payout arrived quietly, without ceremony. Robert had expected to feel guilt when he received it, but instead he felt something else—resolve. The money was not a reward for her death; it was a means to build a future she had never allowed him to have.

He used it to purchase the rubber plantation he had once dreamed of owning—the one he had spoken of before Leslie's trial, the one he had believed would give them a fresh start. It was still available, still waiting, still untouched by the chaos of the past.

Dorothy stood beside him as they signed the papers.

"This is your dream," she said.

"It's ours now," Robert replied.

They moved to Sumatra two months later. The plantation was vast—acres of rubber trees stretching toward the horizon, the air thick with the scent of earth and sap. The house was modest but sturdy, perched on a rise overlooking the fields. Dorothy loved it instantly.

Robert felt something he had not felt in years: peace.

He woke each morning to the sound of birds, the rustle of leaves, the soft hum of workers beginning their day. Dorothy tended the garden, wrote letters, and walked the grounds with him each evening. They built a life that was simple, honest, and free of the shadows that had once haunted them.

One night, as they stood beneath the moon, Robert said:

"I never thought I'd be happy again."

Dorothy leaned against him.

"You are," she said. "And so am I."

Ong's Purchase

Back in Singapore, Ong Chi Seng continued his quiet rise.

He purchased Howard's used car—a modest, well-kept vehicle that had carried Howard to countless hearings, meetings, and trials. Ong bought it not out of sentimentality, but out of respect. He had learned the law in that car, traveling beside Howard, listening to his thoughts, absorbing his wisdom.

When the clerk handed him the keys, Ong bowed.

He drove the car slowly through the streets, the engine humming softly, the city unfolding before him. He felt no triumph, no pride—only a quiet sense of continuity. Howard's life had ended, but the lessons he had taught lived on.

Ong parked the car outside his small office, stepped out, and looked at it for a long moment.

"Thank you," he whispered.

Then he went inside to begin his day's work.

The Story Concludes

The widow and the houseboy were buried without ceremony, but their story lingered in whispers. Leslie's memory faded into the colony's folklore—tragic, scandalous, unforgettable. Howard's name was spoken with sadness, not condemnation. And Ong's reputation…

Robert and Dorothy lived quietly on their plantation, their days filled with work, laughter, and the gentle rhythm of a life rebuilt. They wrote letters to friends in Singapore, but they did not return. The past belonged to the colony; their future belonged to Sumatra.

One evening, as the sun dipped low and the moon rose over the rubber trees, Dorothy took Robert's hand.

"We've come a long way," she said.

Robert nodded.

“Yes,” he replied. “And we’re finally home.”

The moon watched them—calm, silent, no longer a witness to lies or murder, but to love, renewal, and the quiet triumph of two souls who had survived the shadows.

And so the story ends.

Not with vengeance. Not with sorrow. But with peace.

Epilogue

Under a Different Moon

The years that followed were quiet ones—gentle, steady, shaped not by scandal or sorrow but by the slow, patient rhythm of ordinary life. The colony remembered the Crosbie affair the way one remembers a storm: with a shiver, with a whisper, with the uneasy knowledge that something powerful had passed through and left the landscape changed.

But for those who had lived inside the storm, the change was deeper.

Robert and Dorothy

On the plantation in Sumatra, Robert and Dorothy Crosbie built a life that felt almost like a second birth. The rubber trees grew tall and orderly, their rows stretching toward the horizon like lines of verse. The house—modest, sunlit, perched on a rise—became a sanctuary.

Robert rose early each morning, walking the fields with a quiet pride he had never known in Singapore. Dorothy tended the garden, wrote letters, and learned the names of every worker on the estate. In the evenings, they sat on the veranda, watching the sky shift from gold to violet to the deep indigo of night.

Sometimes Robert spoke of Howard.

Not with grief alone, but with gratitude.

“He saved me,” Robert would say. “Even when he shouldn’t have. Even when it cost him everything.”

Dorothy would take his hand.

“He loved you,” she would reply. “And you loved him.”

Robert never denied it.

Their marriage deepened with each passing season—rooted in honesty, shaped by shared sorrow, strengthened by the quiet joy of companionship. They did not speak of Leslie often, but when they did, it was with a kind of distant tenderness, as though she were a figure from a dream that had long since faded.

The plantation prospered. Their hearts healed. And the moon over Sumatra felt different—gentler, less haunted, no longer a witness to lies or murder, but to renewal.

Ong Chi Seng

Back in Singapore, Ong Chi Seng purchased Howard's used car—a modest, well-kept vehicle that had carried Howard to countless hearings, meetings, and trials. Ong bought it not out of sentimentality, but out of respect. He had learned the law in that car, traveling beside Howard, listening to his thoughts, absorbing his wisdom.

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He drove the car slowly through the streets, the engine humming softly, the city unfolding before him. He felt no triumph, no pride—only a quiet sense of continuity. Howard's career had ended, but the lessons he had taught lived on.

Ong parked the car outside his small office, stepped out, and looked at it for a long moment.

"Thank you," he whispered.

Then he went inside to clear out his desk.

The Colony Remembers

The widow and the houseboy were buried quietly, but their story lingered in whispers—tragic, fierce, unsettling. Leslie's name became a cautionary tale, spoken in hushed tones at parties and on verandas. Howard's name was spoken with sadness, not condemnation. And Robert's departure was remembered as a kind of exile, though those who knew him understood it was something gentler: a rebirth.

The colony healed slowly.

The moon rose each night over Singapore, unchanged, indifferent, eternal.

But those who had lived through the Crosbie affair felt its light differently—less accusing, less sharp, more like a reminder that even the darkest nights eventually give way to dawn.

Final Reflection

Years later, on a quiet evening in Sumatra, Robert stood alone beneath the moon, listening to the soft rustle of rubber leaves. Dorothy was inside, reading by lamplight. The air was warm, the sky clear, the world peaceful.

Robert whispered into the night:

"Thank you, Howard."

The moon shone softly, as though acknowledging the words.

Dorothy stepped onto the veranda, her presence gentle.

"Come inside," she said. "It's late."

Robert turned to her, smiling.

"Yes," he said. "I'm coming."

He took her hand.

And together they walked into the house, leaving the moon to watch over the quiet fields, the distant past, and the life they had built from truth, sorrow, and love.

The story ends here.

Not with vengeance. Not with tragedy. But with peace.

BONUS CHAPTER:

THE CONFESSION OF LESLIE CROSBIE

A Prequel to The Murder of Leslie Crosbie

The Document Found Among Her Effects

It was written in Leslie's hand — the same elegant, looping script that once adorned invitations, thank-you notes, and the small domestic niceties expected of a planter's wife.

But this document was different. It bore the tremor of a woman who had lived too long with a secret that refused to stay buried.

The confession was undated. Only the ink betrayed its age: a brownish fade, as though the truth itself had oxidized.

What follows is a faithful rendering of that confession, accompanied by brief histories of the principal figures whose lives were entangled in the events she describes.

Leslie's Confession

I write this because silence has become a weight I can no longer carry. I write this because the truth, once ignored, becomes a living thing — pacing the corridors of the mind, whispering in the night, demanding acknowledgment. I write this because Geoff Hammond is dead, and I am the reason.

Before the world knew me as Mrs. Robert Crosbie — the respectable hostess, the dutiful wife, the woman who could arrange flowers and feign serenity — I was someone else. I was a woman who believed passion could be controlled, that desire could be folded neatly into the corners of a life built on propriety. I was wrong.

Geoff entered my life like a monsoon wind: sudden, humid, impossible to ignore. He had the kind of presence that made conversation feel like conspiracy. He understood the loneliness that grows in a marriage where affection has cooled into routine. He understood the hunger for something ungoverned.

Our affair began without ceremony. A glance held too long. A conversation that drifted past the boundaries of propriety. A moment in which I realized I was no longer observing temptation but participating in it.

But passion was not the only bond between us. Geoff owned a gambling house — discreet, profitable, and frequented by those who wished to lose money without losing reputation. I was one of them. What began as diversion became compulsion. I accumulated debts I could not repay, debts Geoff allowed to grow because he knew I would return. He understood leverage as well as desire.

There was another secret — darker, more intimate. When our affair reached its fevered height, I became pregnant. Geoff arranged for the matter to be handled quietly, efficiently, without scandal. I told myself it was necessary. I told myself it was merciful. But the truth is that the decision carved a wound in me that never closed.

When Geoff ended the affair — abruptly, without explanation — something in me shattered. I had given him passion, money, trust, and a part of my body I could never reclaim. And he discarded me. Not gently. Not regretfully. But with the cold indifference of a man who had already chosen his next life.

This is the motive that eclipses all others: I was the woman scorned. And Hell has never known a fury like mine.

Every other motive — the debts, the abortion, the threat of exposure, the humiliation of his new marriage — grew from this root. His betrayal was not merely romantic; it was existential. He had taken from me the illusion that I mattered. And when he returned to the colony, he carried something else: the intention to expose me.

He said he would reveal the gambling debts. He said he would reveal the abortion. He said he would reveal everything.

He spoke of these things with a coldness I had never seen in him. He wanted power, not reconciliation. He wanted to remind me that my life — my marriage, my reputation, my carefully curated existence — rested on foundations he could shatter with a single sentence.

And there was more. Geoff had married an Asian woman during his absence — a union I despised not for its romance but for what it represented. I confess this with shame: I was an elitist, a racist, a woman who believed herself superior by birth and culture. I saw her as an affront, a humiliation, a symbol of Geoff's final rejection of me. Her presence made his threats sharper, more unbearable.

He came to me one night because of my letter. I do not know whether he intended cruelty or triumph. I only know that the conversation escalated, that words became accusations, that the past became a weapon. He said something — I will not write it here — that struck at the deepest part of my shame.

I reached for the revolver before I understood what I was doing.

The first shot was instinct. The second was fear. The remaining shots were the echo of a woman who no longer recognized herself.

I have told the world a version of that night that protects me. But this is the truth: I killed Geoff Hammond not because he threatened me physically, but because left me for that woman and he threatened to unmake me should I complicate his new life.

And I could not bear it.

Biographical Notes on the Principal Figures

Leslie Crosbie

Born into a family that prized decorum above authenticity, Leslie learned early how to perform virtue. Her marriage to Robert offered stability but little emotional nourishment. Intelligent, restless, and accustomed to suppressing her own desires, she became vulnerable to the first man who treated her as more than an ornament. Her gambling, her affair, and

the hidden abortion formed a triad of secrets that defined her inner life. Above all, her emotional devastation at Geoff's rejection became the central motive for the murder — the fury of a woman scorned, amplified by fear, shame, and pride.

Geoff Hammond

A man of ambiguous origins and shifting loyalties, Geoff possessed a charisma that made him welcome in circles where he did not truly belong. His gambling house gave him influence over the colony's elite, and his affair with Leslie gave him influence over her. His marriage to an Asian woman — a union that challenged colonial prejudices — revealed a complexity Leslie never understood. His return to the colony was motivated by unfinished business: financial, emotional, and vindictive. His death sealed the mystery of his intentions.

Robert Crosbie

A man shaped by routine, stability, and an unwavering belief that order creates happiness. He loved Leslie as part of the carefully arranged life he built—protectively, but without the curiosity or emotional presence that true intimacy requires. Because he equated silence with harmony, he never saw the loneliness growing inside their marriage or the desperation that eventually consumed her.

His flaw was a quiet blindness: he believed comfort and security were enough, never realizing that Leslie needed connection, not just structure. The scandal shattered his assumptions, forcing him to confront a woman he never truly knew. After her death, he carried himself with dignity but was hollowed by confusion and grief, mourning sincerely yet still unable to grasp the inner life she had lived beside him.

In time, however, Robert found something he had never known before—a second chance at love. With Dorothy, he discovered a relationship built not on routine but on genuine companionship. Their new life together offered him warmth, understanding, and the emotional presence he had once lacked. Dorothy did not replace Leslie; rather, she helped Robert grow beyond the limitations that had defined him. In this new beginning, he finally learned that order alone cannot sustain a heart, and that love requires attention, imagination, and shared vulnerability.

Geoff's Wife

A woman of dignity and quiet strength, she endured the colony's prejudices with grace. Her marriage to Geoff was a union of mutual need rather than romance, but she remained loyal to him even as he pursued dangerous entanglements. Leslie despised her not for anything she had done, but for what she represented: a life Geoff chose that did not include Leslie.

The Unnamed Intermediaries

There were others — friends, servants, acquaintances — who witnessed fragments of the truth without understanding its whole. Their recollections formed the scaffolding of the official narrative, but none of them ever glimpsed the private storm that preceded the murder.

Author's Biography

Jim Giatas is an American author, theologian, poet, and dramatist whose work is distinguished by its contemplative voice, lyrical precision, and exploration of the moral and spiritual tensions that shape human experience. His writing blends theological insight with atmospheric storytelling, creating narratives that move between the intimate and the expansive with deliberate grace.

The author has written numerous devotional, theological, and poetic works, each marked by a disciplined structure and a deep concern for the interior life. His dramatic fiction includes *Old Glory*, a work that examines patriotism, identity, and the fragile architecture of national memory through a vivid and emotionally charged narrative. With *The Murder*

***of Leslie Crosbie*, he extends his literary range into psychological and historical fiction, offering readers an original reimagining of a classic moral tragedy.**

A resident of Fredonia, New York, the author maintains a public archive of his writings and musical compositions at *jimgiatas.com*, and Internet Archive.com where his work is freely accessible to readers and listeners. His creative life is shaped by a devotion to craft, a reverence for spiritual inquiry, and a commitment to producing art that speaks with clarity, honesty, and emotional truth.

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The Murder of Leslie Crosbie

Sequel and Prequel Edition I

Including *Epilogue Addendum: The Confession of Leslie Crosbie*

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